

Can a Man Ever Give a Good Reward to a Woman; Post-Feminist Media and Culture: A Case Study of Pakistani Drama “Digest Writer” by Umera Ahmad

1. **Muhammad Owais Ayaz** (MPhil scholar, Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat, Pakistan)
 2. **Dr Abdus Samad**, Assistant Professor/Chairman Department of English, Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat, Pakistan
Email: dr.samad@kust.edu.pk
 3. **Dr. Mansoor Ali**, Assistant Professor Department of English Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat Email: sorroali@yahoo.com
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ABSTRACT

The post feministic characteristics exposed through social media plays a vital role in changing the minds of concerned audience. The study in hand discusses the masculinity in the light of post-feminism. For this, the depiction of the man in the Pakistani drama “Digest writer” by Umera Ahmed has been examined. Moreover, gender role reversal and language used in the drama has been analyzed. The purpose of this study is to expose the female empowerment and the male confinement in today’s society. This study attempts to identify the socially constructive discourses used in the drama, depicting the society. It also helps in ending up the gender discrimination and improving our social relations and predictions about the opposite gender.

INTRODUCTION

Gender discrimination has always remained a hot topic. It is the significant social problem in the world. In PAKISTAN, women have also been facing gender stereotypes. In response, Feminist literature has countered the stereotypes constructed by patriarchal societies. It has been asking for woman rights. But, with the passage of time, the different waves of feminism have changed the face of discrimination by blaming men for all the faults. Actually, Women are in the power. Everywhere, we observe that the concept of “Ladies First” is dominant. If a third person observes that the boy and girl are fighting, one will immediately preconceive that the boy might have tried to harass her, he might have disturbed her or the fault lies in the boy because he is male. Stereotypically, man is considered as the real enemy of a woman. Postfeminist literature and media culture are

exercising woman empowerment. In everyday discourse, masculinity is targeted but men’s crises are marginalized. Similarly, in the drama “Digest writer”, the author “Umera Ahmad” depicts the male characters in the same way. In the present study, the researcher examined and analyzed that it is not only the woman who is the victim of gender discrimination, rather men are more targeted and they suffer more. The stereotypes regarding men that they enjoy the absolute freedom and they are not subjugated by woman in any aspect are discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term “feminism” can be defined as an attempt to compete with the patriarchy system. Patriarchy system refers to “the power relations, in which women’s interests are subordinate to the interests of men”. The feminist activity is not a monolithic

universal phenomenon. Rather, it has developed with the time at different speeds, in different shades and in different countries. So, it has different forms from 1550 to the present time. The different forms/shades can be traced in the world. The roots of the early feminism can be connected in Greece with Sappho (570 B.C) and in England with Mary Wollstonecraft (1797 A.D). The early feminists start to combat the negative view of a woman. But even up to 1700, women had no legal rights, including the right to vote. After the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the rise of the professional woman in the arts gave a starting channel to express feminist ideas. Later, in Medieval Europe, a literary debate started that encouraged and discouraged the women and their struggle for rights. Later on, in Renaissance, women's views about education were exposed. Until the late sixteenth century, the ideal of female behavior was "silent and obedient".

In the 19th and early 20th century throughout the world, the first wave of feminism took place. It focused on the legal issues; primarily on gaining women's suffrage (the right to vote). The political origins of feminism came from the "French Revolution (1789)". This event raised legal equality, freedoms and political rights as its central objectives. Feminism has its sources in the 18th century, specifically in the Enlightenment. In this cultural and philosophical movement, there was a controversy over equality and gender differences. The feminism properly emerged in the 1960s through the second wave of feminism. The first wave only asked for political and some major legal rights. The second wave demanded the social and domestic rights. It completely exposed the patriarchal society. In that period, intra-feminism dispute occurred and the feminist diverged into two views. The one was liberal feminism, demanded the liberty of women

and also talked about the integrity of within the structure of society. The other was radical in approach. The Radical feminism states that the laws of the world are too biased (patriarchal). It supports and benefits only men Kelly Weisberg (1993). It even rejected the concept of sex and argued that it is socially constructed. It tried to destroy patriarchal societies. The third wave of feminism began in the 1990s and is still continued to the present. It is a reaction to or continuation of second-wave feminism, and constitutes a partial destabilization of constructs from the second wave. It attempts to expand feminism to include women with a diverse set of identities recognizing that women are of "many colors, ethnicities, nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds". It tries to redefine the term feminist. It emphasizes the benefits of female support networks, and takes into account the ways in which women writers, in the later part of the century, supported each other in print and in practice. Moreover avoided to use male and female but considered both as a people. Later on, the next generation of the supporters of this type of feminism was named as "Postfeminists". The term "Post Feminism" has been used for the first time in 1919 in the journal "Family literary Radicals". The journal included that, "we are interested in people now, but not in men and women" (Gowri Sankar, 2016). The concept of Post feminism can be understood with the feminism and the antifundamentalist movements; post structuralism, post modernism and post-colonialism. The concept of "post" is the same here which is in other anti-fundamentalist movements. The one, it indicates that the feminists have achieved all its goals and now there is no need of further movements. The second, it implies the continuation of feminism like in post-colonialism the prefix "post" does not claim the end of colonialism. The former is the

popular concept propagated by the media that is the death of feminism, anti-feminism. Post-feminists believe that feminism is now irrelevant. The post-feminism was first time used after the achievement of women's suffrage in U.S. Post feminism generated a debate. Post feminists believe that feminism is not relevant in today's society. Young women are reviled of women's movements. But, the feminists criticize that post-feminism is the backlash of feminism and has the patriarchal agenda. Vicki Coppock, Deena Haydon and Ingrid Richter (1995), remark that post-feminism is an illusion. In one of the discussions, Isobel Armstrong (1992) says: "We can never become postfeminists". The feminists further argue that post-feminism defends men who refuse to acknowledge the oppression of women and makes to appear women's liberation as tyrannical. Post-feminists assert that feminism spoils the women's right to be sexually attractive, to flirt, enjoy domestic bliss and destroys the family setups. Postfeminist sensibility redefines the idea that men are now in crisis and vulnerable. Understanding postfeminist masculinity needs to acknowledge the success of feminism. It throws light on Feminists Movements that they have successfully achieved their goals. Now they are putting men in disadvantage and crisis. Moreover, the post-feminist sensibility focuses on female empowerment and individual choice. While this postfeminist sensibility places emphasis on female empowerment and individual choice. In this heterogeneous combination, men are represented as wounded by Feminists. This leads to the concerns about future of men in the world. It exposes the hegemonic concept of womanhood, gained by feminism. In relation that Post-feminist media and culture represents men in crisis in comparison to the empowered and successful women.

Hollywood man is collected in the published article "Screening Images of American Masculinity in the Age of postfeminist" (Abele et al., 2015). This collection of images and texts interrogates the U.S masculinity. When feminist thought gradually involved more in the mainstream. For example in Chapter 7, they analyze the character of Fraiser Crane, from the sitcom "Frasier", who desires to have a life partner but after dating the sexy and smart girl he faces a dilemma that previous generation had never faced. He finds himself in the submissive role as the women have more powers and a salary. Frasier's response demonstrates the tension present within postfeminist masculinity.

Similarly, this type of post-feminist masculinity can also be found in our Pakistan dramas. For example "Digest Writer". Digest Writer is the Pakistani drama aired on Hum TV. It has twenty-two episodes. The main theme of the drama is related to feminism. The writer has shown how the central character, Farida, a woman sacrifices all her desires in the patriarchal society and how it is difficult for her to be the daughter, wife, mother, writer and the lover at the same time. Whereas, her husband, Shaukat, is depicted as a postfeminist man, who does nothing except the exploiting her. Here, in this paper, we examine how the masculinity is depicted in the drama.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to analyze the empowerment process of women by replacing men. So, in this study, gender role reversal method is used to explore the ways that have influenced gender expected role. First, data from the videos of each episode is analyzed qualitatively using techniques such as content analysis and constant comparison to generate categories and themes. These analyses led to the further review of results and interpretations. On the

drama, Quantitative method is applied. For example, the total number of male and female characters and its significance related to the whole narrative. Further, comparing with the females, the experience of male characters was inspected, their representation was analyzed, their psychoanalysis explored, their identity issues discussed and their role in the society was investigated. The use of language in the drama was also analyzed. Moreover, the drama was observed in the context of the author, because background of the author plays an important role in building the perceptions.

ANALYSIS

The plot of the drama *Digest Writer* is all about the girl, Farida. She belongs to the lower middle class. She decides to become the digest writer. She works sleepless nights and becomes the writer with the pen name "Rashki Hina" but her parents criticize her writing and do not allow her to write. In spite of obeying them, she secretly continues to write. When she gets the earning and starts to help the parents in financial crisis, they start to like her and change their minds. Now she is writing and earning without any obstruction except her aunt. Her aunt does not want that Farida gets name and fame and wants her to marry his son, Shaukat. At first, Farida rejects to marry him and befriends with one of her fans, Shaheryar. Later on, she accepts to marry her cousin, Shaukat. Before the marriage, he was very much loving to her and promised her to make her happy and allowed to do anything she wanted. After the marriage, just on the wedding night, Farida becomes shocked that he is not the man of his words and prohibits her for writing and orders to become not more than the housewife. Not only husbands but also other members of the house do not give respect to her. Even, her parents can't do anything for her. She silently suffers. She gives birth to a daughter but her Aunt is not happy with the baby girl

because she wants to have a baby boy as her grandson. One day her uncle gets an accident, so they feel difficulty in household expenses, and her aunt asks her to start writing again in order to keep all the money from her. She signs two dramas for writing and within one year she becomes famous and rich. One day suddenly, she again meets Shaheryar and she admits that she is not happy with the marriage. After some days, Shaheryar again proposes her for marriage and assures that he will take care of her children as well as. Farida decides to divorce Shaukat but her well-wishers suggest her not to do and to think about the children, because they are not going to accept a stranger as their father. Then, finally Shaukat also admits his mistakes and promises to change himself. On the other side, Farida does not get satisfied from Shaheryar's statements about her daughter. So she decides to stay with the Shaukat and to shun the relations with Shaheryar. Obviously, the story is related to the feminism that portrays how a woman suffers in the patriarchal society. That is true that women face many hardships but the opposite genders must not be rejected. Rather they should be observed as the drama is completely. In the drama, there is not any bias. No man in the drama is depicted as true and loyal to woman. We can see that all the characters of male are presented as bad, arrogant and somehow cruel towards woman. Male characters are drawn in the negative views. It is because of the effect of the feminism on the mind of the writer. This can be called as the postfeminist depiction of the man.

Throughout the drama, there are five major characters; Shaukat, Anwar, Shaheryar, Farhan and the father of Shaukat. If we analyze these characters we will find every one of them is independent, passive and under the influence of women. For example, Shaukat remains jobless and lives on the earning of the wife. Though his wife is

faithful to him, he flirts with other girls. He is too idiot and arrogant to see the sacrifices of his wife and is easily misguided by Mom. Similarly, Anwar, the father of Farida is also under the control of the sister. Whatever she says, he blindly follows her. It is because of the woman, his sister, he destroys the life of daughter and it is because of the woman, his daughter, he becomes able to run the house. The same is the case with the father of Shaukat, he is also a passive character and unable to do against the disrespectful attitude of his family to Farida. Another male character, Shehryar has also not given any important role. He is just the fan and lover of Farida. He is not fair to his first wife and proposes Farida for the second marriage. In the drama, the only male character who is fair is the younger brother of Farida, Farhan. He is portrayed fair because within the plot he grows up under the care of the woman, Farida. Though he is fair, he is also dependent on the female character. So overall, female characters are dominant in the drama. Besides characters, if we examine the language used in the drama, we will find the language also draws the negative image of men in the minds of the viewers. The female characters, throughout the drama such phrases which entail that there are atrocities on women committed by men. For example, in one scene, the mother of Farida says: "education is an abuse for the woman." Another scene, the mother of Shaukat says: "when the woman becomes the man, it is unable to control her." This comment gives the sense that the men are senseless and out of control. Even, in one of the conversations, Farida mocks at the male character Shaukat. Shaukat: "Farida, I have to say something important to you." Farida replies: "You! and an important thing to say?" In one of the scenes, Farida asks: "Can the man ever give a good reward to a woman?" These types of dialogues suggest that men are targeted in the discourse of the drama.

Moreover, we also know that the writer of the drama is the female, Umera Ahmed. This may be the reason that social or external relations that control its formation. The external factors and subjectivity always affect the way the art is produced. To sum up, in the drama the gender role is reversed. The male characters are depicted as passive and dependent on the female characters as the females were in the patriarchal fiction. Language is stronger. It portrays more urgent picture. The vocabulary is enough to raise concern in the viewer's minds. The negative image of man is enough to connect the viewers to the actions. The viewers are lead to believe that men are bad. Thus, the analysis exposes this hegemonic concept of womanhood and gives attention to the victim, the postfeminist man.

CONCLUSION

In any society, both, man and woman, have their gender roles. It is not only the woman who is asking for rights, the man is also fighting for his rights. There are only the stereotypes which lead women against men in the society and these stereotypes are spread by the literature and media culture. In order to end up these discriminatory practices, the results of this study suggest that we should not be the blind followers of the socially constructive discourses and need to know how the postfeminist masculinity is constructed. Thus, this research, in this regard, improves understanding between opposite genders in our society and develops social relations free from discrimination.

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